

What is claimed is:

1. An absorbent device for insertion into a vaginal cavity, the absorbent device comprising:

a) an absorbent body; and

b) an indicator structure arranged and configured within the absorbent body, the indicator structure comprising a resilient member maintained in a strained configuration by a restraint;

wherein the resilient member is capable of reverting to a relaxed configuration upon the weakening of the restraint and the restraint weakens upon exposure to moisture.

2. The absorbent device of claim 1 wherein the absorbent body comprises absorbent material.

3. The absorbent device of claim 2 wherein the absorbent material is formed of fibers, foams, or combinations thereof.

4. The absorbent device of claim 3 wherein the fibers are hydrophilic.

5. The absorbent device of claim 4 wherein the fibers are absorbent.

6. The absorbent device of claim 1 wherein the restraint maintains the resilient member in a compressed configuration.

7. The absorbent device of claim 1 wherein the restraint maintains the resilient member in a stretched configuration.

8. The absorbent device of claim 1 wherein the restraint maintains the resilient member in a bent configuration.

5 9. The absorbent device of claim 1 wherein the resilient member is in the shape of a ring.

10 10. The absorbent device of claim 1 wherein the resilient member is a spring.

11. The absorbent device of claim 1 wherein the resilient member is formed of plastics, metals, and combinations thereof.

15 12. The absorbent device of claim 1 wherein the restraint comprises a water soluble material.

20 13. The absorbent device of claim 12 wherein the restraint comprises a material selected from the group consisting of polyvinyl alcohol, gelatin, water soluble cellulose derivatives, polyethylene oxide, polyethyl propyl acid, polyacrylic acid and combinations thereof.

25 14. An indicator device comprising a resilient member maintained in a strained configuration by a restraint wherein the resilient member is capable of reverting to a relaxed configuration upon the weakening of the restraint and the restraint weakens upon exposure to moisture.

15. A method of absorbing aqueous vaginal fluids comprising the steps of:
a) inserting a first absorbent device into a vaginal cavity, the absorbent device comprising an absorbent body and an indicator structure arranged and

configured within the absorbent body, the indicator structure comprising a resilient member maintained in a strained configuration by a restraint; wherein the resilient member is capable of reverting to a relaxed configuration upon the weakening of the restraint and the restraint weakens upon exposure to moisture

b) allowing the first absorbent device to absorb sufficient aqueous vaginal fluids to weaken the restraint and to permit the resilient member to revert to the relaxed configuration;

c) detecting changed dimensions of the first absorbent device caused by the reversion of the resilient member to the relaxed configuration; and

d) removing the first absorbent device from the vaginal cavity.

16. The method of claim 15 further comprising the step of inserting a second absorbent device into the vaginal cavity after the step of removing the first absorbent device from the vaginal cavity.

17. A method of making an absorbent device comprising the steps of:

a) manipulating a resilient member into a deformed condition;

b) applying a restraint to maintain the resilient member in the deformed condition and to form an indicator structure; and

c) forming an absorbent body containing the indicator structure.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the step of forming the absorbent body comprises forming the absorbent body around the indicator structure.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein the step of forming the absorbent body comprises forming the absorbent body and inserting the indicator structure into the absorbent body.

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